Movement of US Ship in Indian Ocean

1401. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention was drawn to the US research ship, Ron Brown, moving into the Bay of Bengal in North-East Indian Ocean, in May 1999; and

(b) if so, what was the objective behind the US move and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The ship, an Oceanographic and Meteorological Research Vessel of the United States of America was gathering ocean and atmospheric data in the Indian Ocean Region, including the Bay of Bengal. Initially, it operated off the West Coast of India from 4th March, to 23rd March, 1999, and, thereafter, moved from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal for carrying out similar observations. Throughout this period, the Vessel had stayed outside the Exclusive Economic Zone *i.e.* beyond 200 Nautical miles from the Indian Coast line.

Kargil Martyrs from A.P.

1402. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of soldiers and officers from Andhra Pradesh killed while driving away infiltrators from Kargil region;

(b) to aid or *ex-gratia* grant provided to each of them by the Central Government;

(c) whether Government have made any arrangement to ensure welfare of family members of the martyrs from time to time;

(d) whether Government are considering to accord higher posts under Central Government to eligible persons among them; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (e) The details of Army personnel from Andhra Pradesh killed in the Kargil conflict are as under:—

1. Maj. P. Acharya
2. Sep. Shaik Mastan Vali
3. Spr. Haji Basha
4. L/NK P. Gopaiah

A comprehensive welfare package has been provided to the next of kin and families of the Armed Forces Personnel killed in the Kargil conflict. This includes ex-gratia lumpsum compensation of Rs. 10 lakhs; liberalised special family pension on the basis of last pay drawn by the deceased soldier; and death gratuity and family gratuity as per specified rates, as applicable. Apart from the above, the following assistance has been provided from the National Defence Fund: Rs. 5 lakhs for dwelling unit; Rs. 1 lakh per child for education upto two children per family; Rs. 1.20 lakhs for needy parents who were dependent on the deceased soldiers. An additional ex-gratia amount of Rs. 30,000/- has also been provided from the Army Central Welfare Fund. The next of kin/families of the four martyrs from Andhra Pradesh have been given all the above benefits. Besides, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has separately earmarked LPG dealerships/distributorships for allocation to the next of kin of the Armed Forces Personnel killed.

The units to which such Army personnel belonged remain in constant touch with the families of the martyrs. Regimental Training Centres have been nominated as the nodal agency to interact with the families and to coordinate all welfare and rehabilitation measures. Besides, Station Hqrs and Sub Area Hadquarters in whose geographical jurisdiction the families of the martyrs are residing, are also in touch with the families; and visiting senior officers also interact with the families.

As per policy in vogue, compassionate appointments in Central Government can be made in Group 'C' and 'D' posts only subject to the fulfilment of some other conditions.